

# New Hampshire Volunteer Lake Assessment Program

## 2002 Interim Report for Robinson Pond Hudson



NHDES  
Water Division  
Watershed Management Bureau  
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# OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important to note that Robinson Pond was the first New Hampshire lake to receive a Sonar treatment to control exotic aquatic plants. This event occurred on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2002. It appeared that the treatment killed off the fanwort and variable milfoil at a slow rate. If the Sonar killed off the plants quickly, we would have expected a quick decomposition rate which would have caused an increase of phosphorus and an increase in chlorophyll-a in the lake. DES would like to follow the water quality progression of Robinson Pond closely during the summer of 2003. We recommend that the annual biologist visit for the 2003 sampling season be scheduled during **June** and during **August or September** so that we can monitor the dissolved oxygen closely.

After reviewing data collected from **ROBINSON POND**, the program coordinators recommend the following actions.

## FIGURE INTERPRETATION

- **Figure 1 and Table 1:** The graphs in Figure 1 (Appendix A) show the historical and current year chlorophyll-a concentration in the water column. Table 1 (Appendix B) lists the maximum, minimum, and mean concentration for each sampling season that the lake/pond has been monitored through the program.

Chlorophyll-a, a pigment naturally found in plants, is an indicator of the algal abundance. Because algae are usually microscopic plants that contain chlorophyll-a and are naturally found in lake ecosystems, the chlorophyll-a concentration found in the water gives an estimation of the concentration of algae or lake productivity. **The mean (average) summer chlorophyll-a concentration for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 7.02 ug/L.**

Similar to the summer of 2001, the summer of 2002 was filled with many warm and sunny days and there was a lower than normal amount of rainfall during the latter-half of the summer. The combination of these factors resulted in relatively warm surface waters throughout the state. The lack of fresh water to the

lakes/ponds reduced the rate of flushing which may have resulted in water stagnation. Due to these conditions, many lakes and ponds experienced increased algae growth, including filamentous green algae (the billowy clouds of green algae typically seen floating near shore), and some lakes/ponds experienced nuisance cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms.

The historical data (the bottom graph) show that the 2002 chlorophyll-a mean is **greater than** the state mean. Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows **a decreasing** in-lake chlorophyll-a trend, meaning that the concentration has **improved** since monitoring began in 2000. Please keep in mind that this trend is based on only three sampling seasons of data. However, we hope this trend continues!

After at least 10 consecutive years of sample collection, we will conduct a statistical analysis of the data. This will allow us to objectively determine if there has been a significant change in the annual mean chlorophyll-a concentration since monitoring began.

While algae are naturally present in all lakes/ponds, an excessive or increasing amount of any type is not welcomed. In freshwater lakes/ponds, phosphorus is the nutrient that algae depend upon for growth. Therefore, algal concentrations may increase when there is an increase in nonpoint sources of nutrient loading from the watershed, or in-lake sources of phosphorus loading (such as phosphorus releases from the sediments). It is important to continually educate residents about how activities within the watershed can affect phosphorus loading and lake quality.

- **Figure 2 and Table 3:** The graphs in Figure 2 (Appendix A) show historical and current year data for lake/pond transparency. Table 3 lists the maximum, minimum and mean transparency data for each sampling season that the lake/pond has been monitored through the program.

Volunteer monitors use the Secchi-disk, a 20 cm disk with alternating black and white quadrants, to measure water clarity (how far a person can see into the water). Transparency, a measure of water clarity, can be affected by the amount of algae and sediment from erosion, as well as the natural colors of the water. **The mean (average) summer transparency for New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 3.7 meters.**

Two different weather related patterns occurred this past spring and summer that influenced lake quality during the summer season.

In late May and early June of 2002, numerous rainstorms occurred. Stormwater runoff associated with these rainstorms may have increased phosphorus loading, and the amount of soil particles washed into waterbodies throughout the state. Some lakes and ponds experienced lower than typical transparency readings during late May and early June.

However, similar to the 2001 sampling season, the lower than average amount of rainfall and the warmer temperatures during the latter-half of the summer resulted in a few lakes/ponds reporting their best-ever Secchi-disk readings in July and August (a time when we often observe reduced clarity due to increased algal growth)!

The historical data (the bottom graph) show that the 2002 mean transparency is ***slightly less than*** the state mean. It is interesting to note that as the sampling season progressed from June to August, the transparency gradually increased.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line (the bottom graph) shows ***a slightly increasing*** trend for in-lake transparency, meaning that the transparency has ***slightly improved*** since monitoring began in 2000. We hope this trend continues!

As discussed previously, after at least 10 consecutive years of sample collection for the lake/pond, we will conduct a statistical analysis of the data to determine lake quality trends.

Typically, high intensity rainfall causes erosion of sediments into the lake/pond and streams, thus decreasing clarity. Efforts should continually be made to stabilize stream banks, lake/pond shorelines, disturbed soils within the watershed, and especially dirt roads located immediately adjacent to the edge of tributaries and the lake/pond. Guides to Best Management Practices designed to reduce, and possibly even eliminate, nonpoint source pollutants are available from NHDES upon request.

- **Figure 3 and Table 8:** The graphs in Figure 3 (Appendix A) show the amounts of phosphorus in the epilimnion (the upper layer) and the hypolimnion (the lower layer); the inset graphs show current year data. Table 8 (Appendix B) lists the annual maximum, minimum, and median concentration for each deep spot layer and each tributary since the lake/pond has joined the program.

Phosphorus is the limiting nutrient for plant and algae growth in New Hampshire's freshwater lakes and ponds. Too much phosphorus in a lake/pond can lead to increases in plant and algal growth over time. **The median summer total phosphorus concentration in the epilimnion (upper layer) of New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is**

**11 ug/L. The median summer phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer) is 14 ug/L.**

The historical data for the epilimnion (upper layer) show that the 2002 total phosphorus mean is **slightly greater than** the state median.

The historical data for the hypolimnion (lower layer) show that the 2002 total phosphorus mean is **much greater than** the state median.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data for the epilimnion shows **a slightly increasing** total phosphorus trend, which means that the concentration has **slightly worsened** in the epilimnion since monitoring began in 2000.

Overall, visual inspection of the historical data trend line for the hypolimnion shows **a variable, but overall increasing**, total phosphorus trend. This means that the concentration in the hypolimnion has **worsened** overall since monitoring began.

It is important to note that the total phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion continues to be much greater than in the epilimnion. This suggests that the process of **internal total phosphorus loading** is occurring in the pond. Please refer to the explanation for Tables 9 and 10 for a more detailed explanation.

One of the most important approaches to reducing phosphorus loading to a waterbody is to continually educate watershed residents about its sources and how excessive amounts can adversely impact the ecology and value of lakes and ponds. Phosphorus sources within a lake or pond's watershed typically include septic systems, animal waste, lawn fertilizer, road and construction erosion, and natural wetlands. If you would like to educate watershed residents about how they can help to reduce phosphorus loading into the lake/pond, please contact the VLAP Coordinator.

#### **TABLE INTERPRETATION**

##### **➤ Table 2: Phytoplankton**

Phytoplankton populations undergo a natural succession during the growing season (Please refer to page 12 of the "Biological Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation regarding seasonal plankton succession). Diatoms and golden-brown algae are typical in New Hampshire's less productive lakes and ponds. An overabundance of cyanobacteria (previously referred to as blue-green algae) indicates that there may be an excessive total phosphorus concentration in the lake/pond, or that the ecology is out of balance.

➤ **Table 2: Cyanobacteria**

While ***Oscillatoria***, a cyanobacterium, was the most dominant species in the phytoplankton sample in July, small amounts of the cyanobacterium ***Microcystis*** was also observed in the sample. ***If present in large amounts, these species can be toxic to livestock, wildlife, pets, and humans*** (Refer to page 14 of the “Biological Monitoring Parameters” section of this report for a more detailed explanation).

Cyanobacteria can reach nuisance levels when excessive nutrients and favorable environmental conditions occur. As with the summer of 2001, we observed that some lakes and ponds had cyanobacteria present during the 2002 summer season, likely due to the many warm and sunny days that occurred this summer, which may have accelerated algal and bacterial growth. In addition, the lower than normal amount of rainfall during the latter half of the summer, meant that the slow flushing rates resulted in less phosphorus exiting the lake outlet and more phosphorus being available for plankton growth.

The presence of cyanobacteria serves as a reminder of the lake's/pond's delicate balance. Watershed residents should continue to act proactively to reduce nutrient loading into the lake/pond by eliminating fertilizer use on lawns, keeping the lake/pond shoreline natural, re-vegetating cleared areas within the watershed, and properly maintaining septic systems and roads.

In addition, residents should also observe the lake/pond in September and October during the time of fall turnover (lake mixing) to document any blooms that may occur. Cyanobacteria have the ability to regulate their depth in the water column by producing or releasing gas from vesicles. However, occasionally lake mixing can affect their buoyancy and cause them to rise to the surface and bloom. Wind and currents tend to “pile” cyanobacteria into “surface scums” that accumulate in one section of the lake/pond. If a fall bloom occurs, please contact the VLAP Coordinator.

➤ **Table 4: pH**

Table 4 (Appendix B) presents the in-lake and tributary current year and historical pH data.

pH is measured on a logarithmic scale of 0 (acidic) to 14 (basic). pH is important to the survival and reproduction of fish and other aquatic life. A pH below 5.5 severely limits the growth and reproduction of fish. A pH between 6.5 and 7.0 is ideal for fish. The mean pH value for the epilimnion (upper layer) in New Hampshire's lakes and ponds is 6.5, which indicates that the surface waters in state are slightly acidic. For a more detailed explanation regarding

pH, please refer to page 16 of the “Chemical Monitoring Parameters” section of this report.

Due to the presence of granite bedrock in the state and the deposition of acid rain, there is not much that can be done to effectively increase lake/pond pH.

➤ **Table 5: Acid Neutralizing Capacity**

Table 5 in Appendix B presents the current year and historic epilimnetic ANC for each year the lake/pond has been monitored through VLAP.

Buffering capacity or ANC describes the ability of a solution to resist changes in pH by neutralizing the acidic input to the lake. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to page 16 of the “Chemical Monitoring Parameters” section of this report.

➤ **Table 6: Conductivity**

Table 6 in Appendix B presents the current and historic conductivity values for tributaries and in-lake data. Conductivity is the numerical expression of the ability of water to carry an electric current. For a more detailed explanation, please refer to page 16 of the “Chemical Monitoring Parameters” section of this report.

The conductivity has **increased** in the lake/pond and inlets since monitoring began (Table 6). Typically, sources of increased conductivity are due to human activity. These activities include septic systems that fail and leak leachate into the groundwater (and eventually into the tributaries and the lake/pond), agricultural runoff, and road runoff (which contains road salt during the spring snow melt). New development in the watershed can alter runoff patterns and expose new soil and bedrock areas, which could contribute to increasing conductivity. In addition, natural sources, such as iron deposits in bedrock, can influence conductivity. It is possible that the lower than normal amount rainfall during the latter-half of the summer reduced tributary and lake flushing, which allowed pollutants and ions to build up and resulted in elevated conductivity levels.

We recommend that your monitoring group conduct stream surveys and stormwater sampling along the inlets with elevated conductivity **(in particular, Stations 2, 4, 6, and 7)** so that we can determine what may be causing the increases. For a detailed explanation on how to conduct a stream survey and stormwater sampling, please refer to this year’s “Special Topic Article” which is included in Appendix D of this report.

➤ **Table 8: Total Phosphorus**

Table 8 in Appendix B presents the current year and historic total phosphorus data for in-lake and tributary stations. Phosphorus is the nutrient that limits the algae's ability to grow and reproduce. Please refer to page 17 of the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

On the **June** sampling event, the total phosphorus concentration in the **Station 7 Inlet** sample was **very high (158 ug/L)** and the turbidity of the sample was **elevated (7.81 NTUs)**. On the **August** sampling event, the total phosphorus concentration in the **Station 4 Inlet** sample was **very high (335 ug/L)** and the turbidity of the sample was **very high (29.6 NTUs)**. On the **September** sampling event, the total phosphorus concentration in the **Station 3 Inlet** sample was **very high (235 ug/L)** and the turbidity of the sample was also elevated (**8.28 NTUs**).

These data suggest that major soil erosion may be occurring in these portions of the watershed, or that the stream bottom on these sampling events may have been disturbed while sampling (Table 11). However, the laboratory staff commented that sediment was observed in these samples. In addition, many of these bottles were only half full. Therefore, based on these laboratory observations, it is likely that these samples were taken from shallow streams that had minimal, therefore, the stream bottom may have been disturbed. When the stream bottom is disturbed, sediment, which typically contains attached phosphorus, is released into the water column.

➤ **Table 9 and Table 10: Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Data**

Table 9 in Appendix B shows the dissolved oxygen/temperature profile(s) for the 2002 sampling season. Table 10 shows the historical and current year dissolved oxygen concentration in the hypolimnion (lower layer). The presence of dissolved oxygen is vital to fish and amphibians in the water column and also to bottom-dwelling organisms. Please refer to the "Chemical Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

The dissolved oxygen concentration was **low in the metalimnion and hypolimnion** at the deep spot of the lake/pond in **July**. As stratified lakes/ponds age, oxygen becomes **depleted** in the hypolimnion (the lower layer) by the process of decomposition. Specifically, the loss of oxygen in the hypolimnion results primarily from the process of biological breakdown of organic matter (i.e.; biological organisms use oxygen to break down organic matter), both in the water column and particularly at the bottom of the lake/pond where the water meets the sediment.



During this season, and many past sampling seasons the lake/pond has had a lower dissolved oxygen concentration and a higher total phosphorus concentration in the hypolimnion (the lower layer) than in the epilimnion (the upper layer). These data suggest that the process of **internal total phosphorus loading** (commonly referred to as **internal loading**) is occurring in the lake/pond. When oxygen levels are depleted to less than 1 mg/L in the hypolimnion (as it was this season and in many past seasons), the phosphorus that is normally bound up with metals in the sediment may be re-released into the water column. Depleted oxygen concentration in the hypolimnion of thermally stratified lakes/ponds typically occurs as the summer progresses.

The **low** oxygen level in the hypolimnion is a sign of the lake's/pond's **aging** and **declining** health.

➤ **Table 11: Turbidity**

Table 11 in Appendix B lists the current year and historic data for in-lake and tributary turbidity. Turbidity in the water is caused by suspended matter, such as clay, silt, and algae. Water clarity is strongly influenced by turbidity. Please refer to page 19 of the "Other Monitoring Parameters" section of this report for a more detailed explanation.

As discussed previously, the turbidity was elevated in many of the inlet samples this season.

In addition, the turbidity of the hypolimnion (lower layer) sample was elevated on many of the sampling events this season. This suggests that the pond bottom has a soft, mucky organic bottom which is easily disturbed.

➤ **Table 12: Bacteria (*E.coli*)**

Table 12 lists the current year data for bacteria (*E.coli*) testing. *E. coli* is a normal bacterium found in the large intestines in humans and other warm-blooded animals. *E.coli* is used as an indicator organism because it is easily cultured, and its presence in the water, in defined amounts, indicates that sewage **MAY** be present. If sewage is present in the water, potentially harmful pathogens may also be present.

The *E. coli* concentration at *Station 1* and **Station 7** was elevated (150 and 290 counts per 100 mL of sample respectively) on the **June 26<sup>th</sup>** sampling event. However, the concentrations **did not exceed** the state standard of 406 counts per 100 mL designated for Class B waters.

If you are concerned about *E. coli* levels at these stations, your monitoring group may want to conduct stormwater sampling along these inlets so that we can determine what may be causing the elevated concentrations. For a detailed explanation on how to conduct stormwater sampling, please refer to this year's special topic which is found in Appendix D of this report.

### **DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTROL**

#### **Sample Receipt Checklist:**

Each time your monitoring group dropped off samples at the laboratory this summer, the laboratory staff completed a sample receipt checklist to assess and document if the volunteer monitors followed proper sampling techniques when collecting the samples. The purpose of the sample receipt checklist is to minimize, and hopefully eliminate, future re-occurrences of improper sampling techniques.

Overall, the sample receipt checklist showed that your monitoring group did a **good** job when collecting samples this season! Specifically, the members of your monitoring group followed the most of the proper field sampling procedures when collecting and submitting samples to the laboratory.

- **Sample "Cooling":** Please remember to bring a cooler with ice when you sample. Samples should be put directly into the cooler and kept on ice until they are dropped off at the laboratory. This will ensure that samples do not degrade before they are analyzed.
- **Chlorophyll-a Sampling:** When collecting the chlorophyll-a sample using the composite method, please make sure to collect one Kemmerer bottle full of water at each meter from the starting point up to 1 meter from the surface. Specifically, in lakes with one or two thermal layers, begin at 2/3 the total depth and collect water at every meter up to the surface. In lakes with three layers, start at the middle of the middle layer (metalimnion) and collect water at every meter up to the surface.
- **Tributary Sampling:** Please do not sample tributaries that are not flowing. Due to the lack of flushing, stagnant water typically contains elevated amounts of chemical and biological constituents that will lead to erroneous results.
- **Tributary Sampling:** Sediment/debris was observed in the white sample bottles on numerous occasions this summer. Please do not sample tributaries that are too shallow to collect a "clean" sample and do not sample the stream if the stream bottom has been disturbed.

You may need to move upstream or downstream to collect a “clean” sample. If you disturb the stream bottom while sampling, please rinse out the bottle and move to an upstream location and sample in an undisturbed area.

- **Sample Bottle Volume:** Please remember to fill all sample bottles up to the neck of the bottle. In addition, please do not leave any room for air bubbles in the *E.coli* bottles.

### **OTHER COMMENTS**

- We recommend that the annual biologist visit be scheduled in early **June**. The biologist would like to meet with the entire monitoring group to provide a brief refresher training on field sampling techniques.

### **NOTES**

- **Monitor’s Note (6/26/02):** Station 1 nearly dry, but sample taken anyway.
- **Biologist’s Note (7/31/02):** Blue-green algae observed in the water column at the deep spot. Station 1 and 6 dry so no samples taken.
- **Biologist’s Note (8/28/02):** Stations 1, 2 and 6 dry.

### **USEFUL RESOURCES**

*Changes to the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act: 2001 Legislative Session*, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3505, or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-8.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-8.htm)

*Cyanobacteria in New Hampshire Waters Potential Dangers of Blue-Green Algae Blooms*, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3505, or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/wmb/wmb-10.htm)

*Managing Lakes and Reservoirs, Third Edition, 2001*. Prepared by the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) and the Terrene Institute in cooperation with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Copies are available from NALMS (internet: [www.nalms.org](http://www.nalms.org), phone 608-233-2836), and the Terrene Institute (internet: [www.terrene.org](http://www.terrene.org), phone 800-726-4853)

*Organizing Lake Users: A Practical Guide*. Written by Gretchen Flock, Judith Taggart, and Harvey Olem. Copies are available from the Terrene Institute (internet: [www.terrene.org](http://www.terrene.org), phone 800-726-4853)

*Proper Lawn Care in the Protected Shoreland: The Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act*, WD-SP-2, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/sp/sp-2.htm)

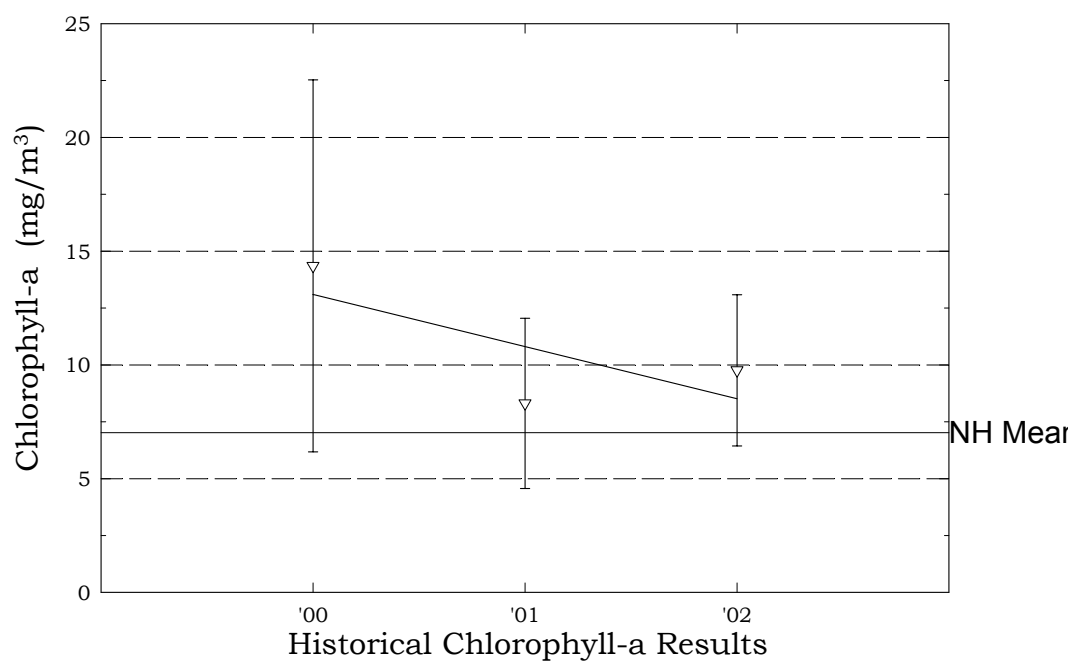
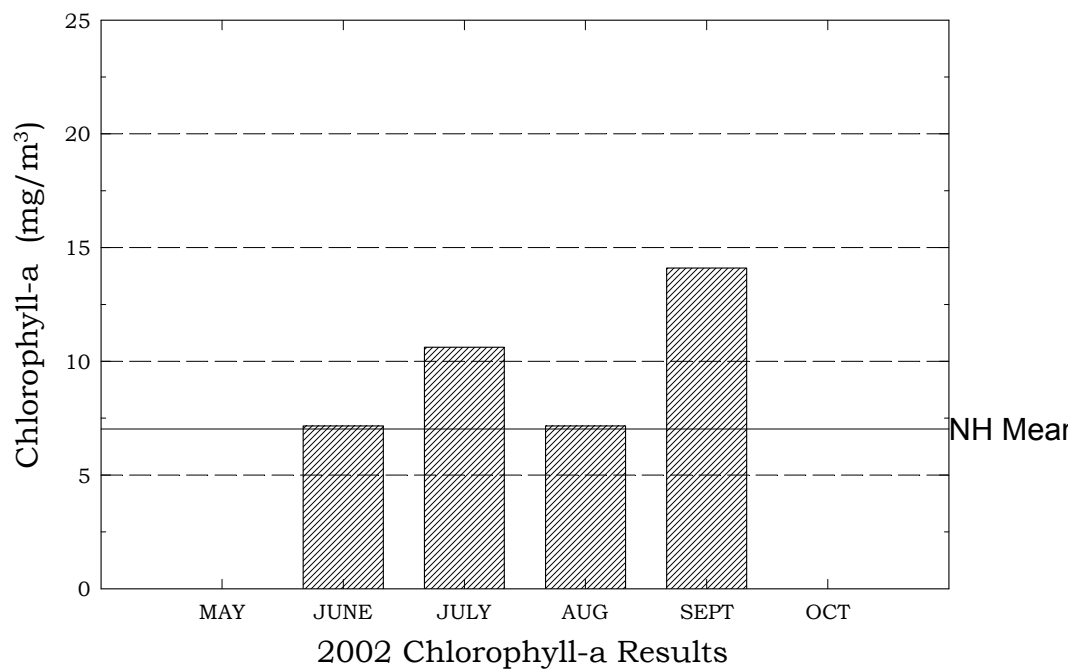
*Sand Dumping - Beach Construction*, WD-BB-15, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-15.htm)

*Swimmers Itch*, WD-BB-2, NHDES Fact Sheet, (603) 271-3503 or [www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-2.htm](http://www.des.state.nh.us/factsheets/bb/bb-2.htm)

# Appendix A: Graphs

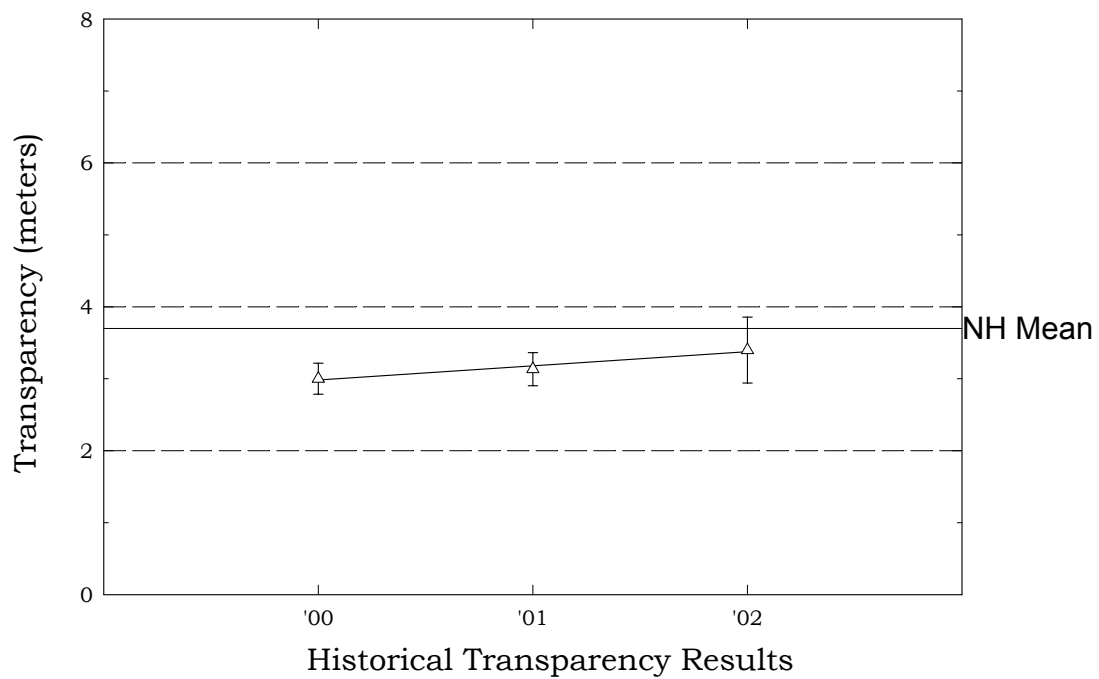
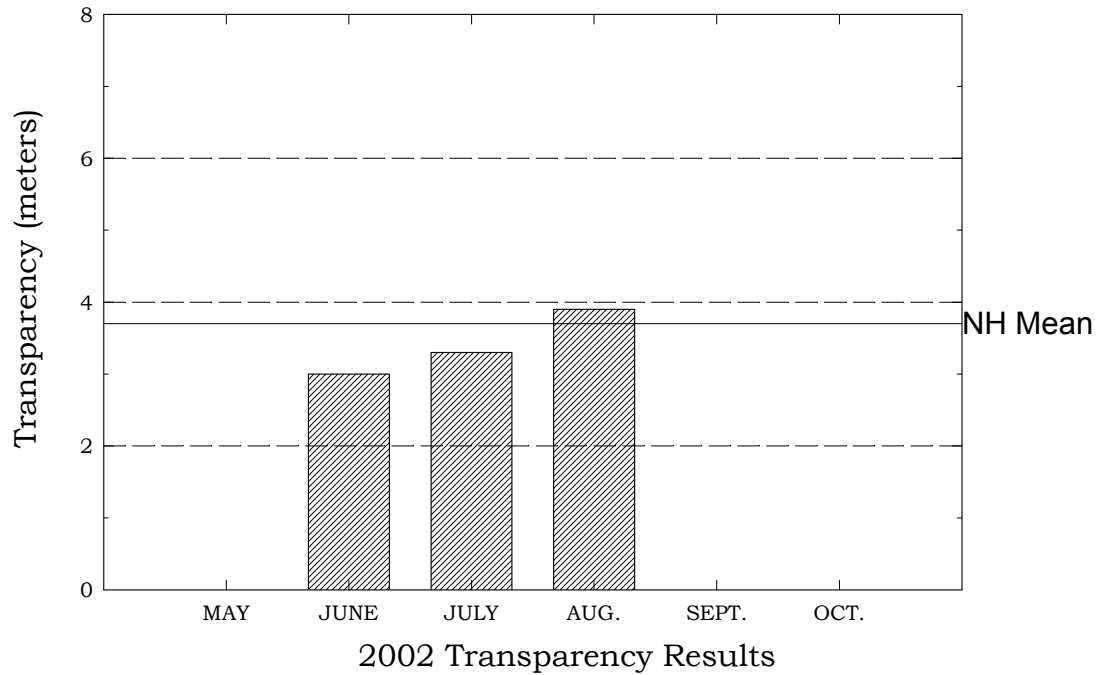
# Robinson Pond, Hudson

**Figure 1.** Monthly and Historical Chlorophyll-a Results



# Robinson Pond, Hudson

**Figure 2.** Monthly and Historical Transparency Results



# Robinson Pond, Hudson

**Figure 3.** Monthly and Historical Total Phosphorus Data.

